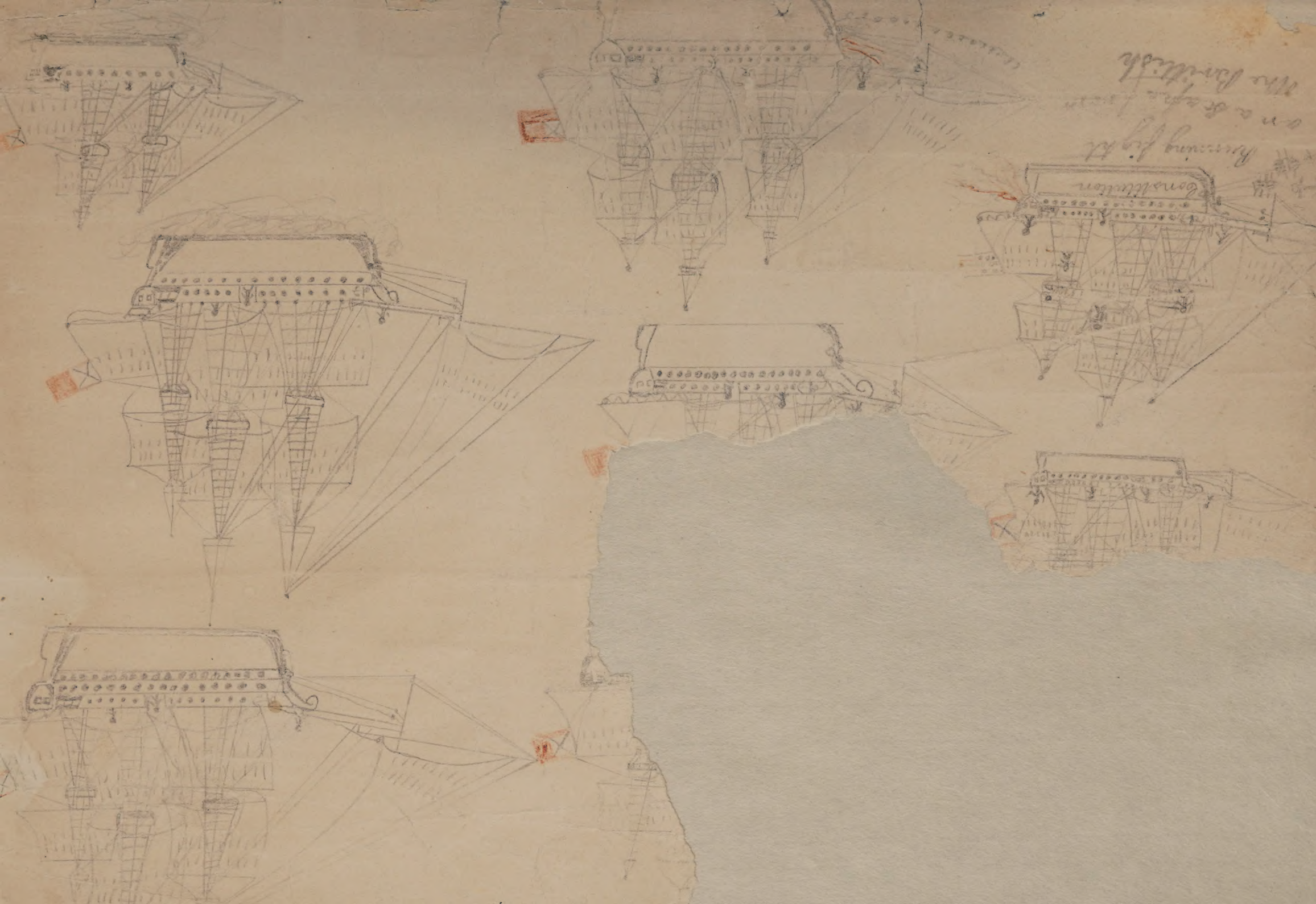
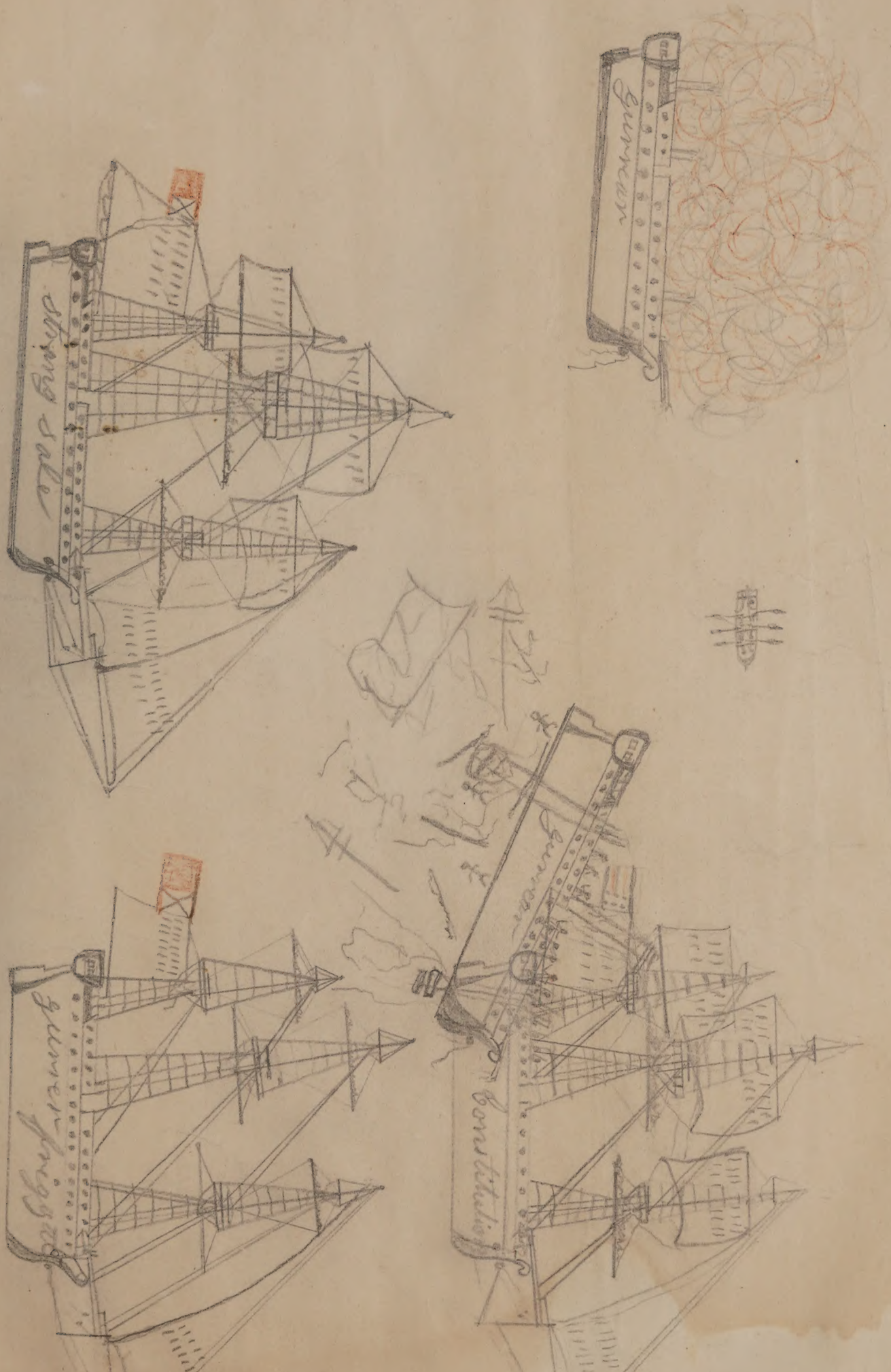
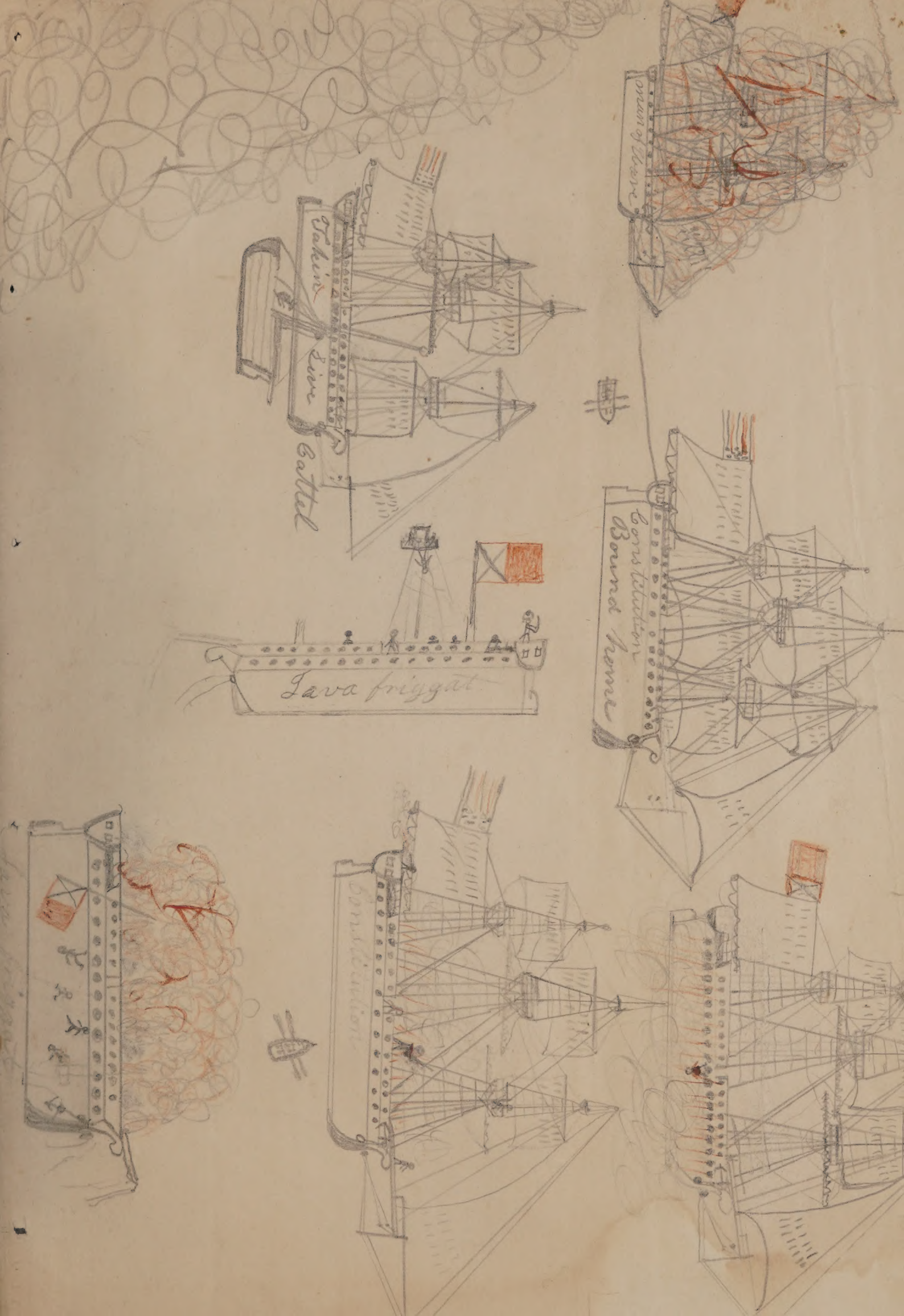
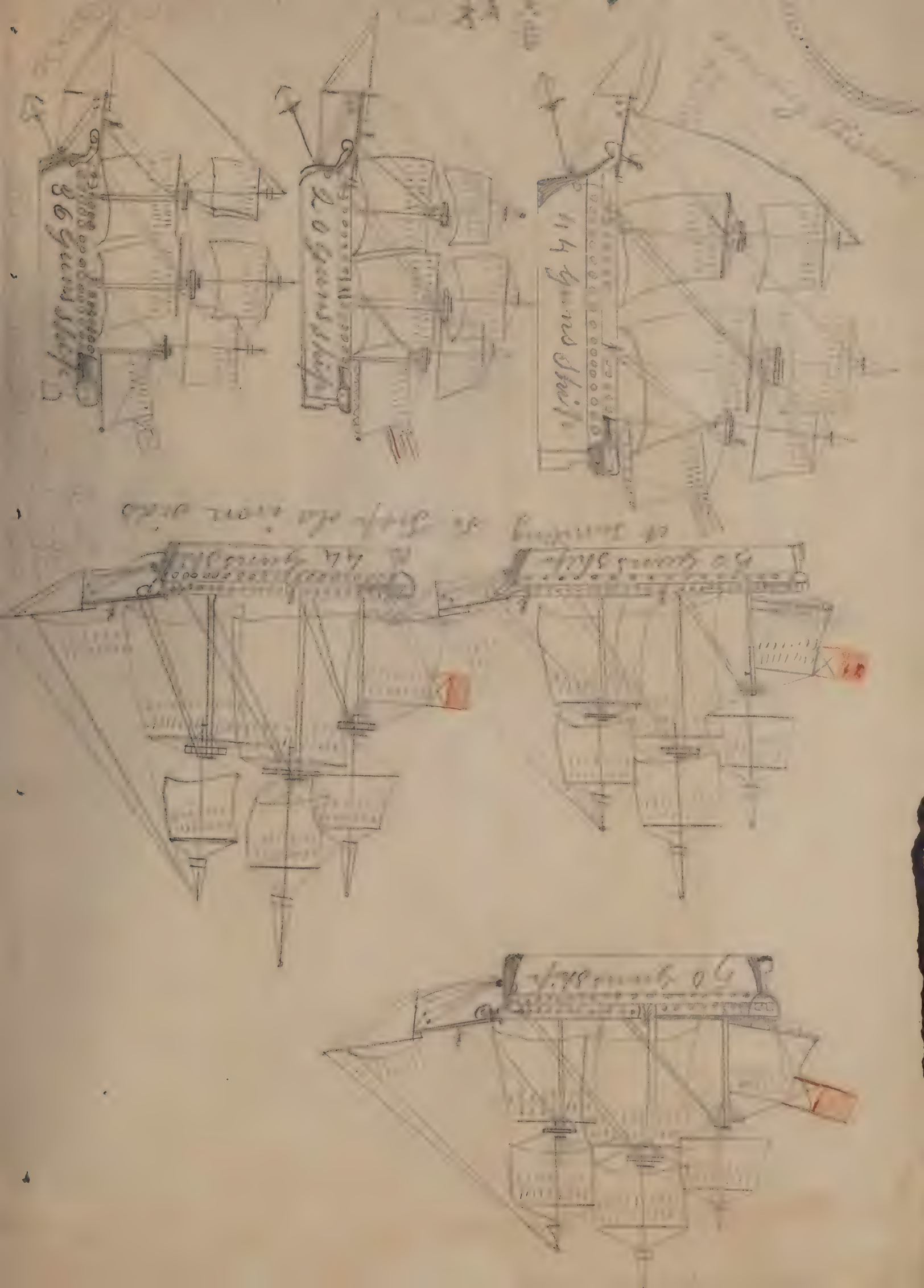



Guerriere
Constitution


Talkin Liar
Battel
Java frigat
Constitution
Bound home



Narrative of the Cruises of the U. S. Frigate Constitution

By Thomas C. Byron.

Charlestown January 1st 1861.

On the return of the Constitution from France, Captain Isaac Hull Hazarden Upton Captain of the Yard Lieutenant Commandant Morris sailing Master for Captain Hull having sailed in her before. We took in our water for the cruise and had seventy seamen and two hundred Marines. We sailed down to Alexandria where we lay when the Declaration of War was read on the officers and Company with three cheers shouting God bless our country. This was the spirit of that noble crew.

The next morning we dropped down the river and on the 1st of July we passed Annapolis where we found at anchor with Cutter and small guns. Next morning we arrived at Boston and during our cruising Manufactured Shoals fell in with a British squadron seven in number, the Africa Sixty four Guerriere, Shannon Belvidera Eolus & Macedonian. When we fell in with them in the night, the next morning it was calm and they were not more than two miles gun shot off. Hull then said to his men, we are along side surrounded but by God we will get out. We will bear her up and go with her; we then got three cheers and the Captain ordered the guns to be run in to bring up head and the Carpenter and his crew

Deck. This was done and
we all passed it and the
prepared for an escape.
Charles Morris first
Lieutenant sounded
and found bottom at
thirty five fathom. He
put Boats ten on a plank
to Cage one but to keep the
Ship stair caused
the cage and disposed
we then manned the capstan
and put it at the same
time ran out the
small to return the
cage another: This is the
way we managed our way
from there, at the same
time we hoisted our flag
and commenced firing
when guns which was
all us the headmost
Ship fired her broad
sides but did no damage
they then fired two guns
which was a return flag.
They had 15 to 18 strong
ing the road but
all to no use. About 12
o'clock the breeze springing
up and by 4 P.M. we
lost sight of them

and anchored at 8 P.M.
We then took in provisions
for a few months cruise
and put to sea. Stood
in the latter part of July
cruising on the Gibraltar
banks but fell in with the
Guerriere frigate one
of the same Ships that
engaged the Squadron
that chased us off
Newfoundland. Boats
in a Storm was separated
from the rest, this happened
4 o'clock P.M. on the 19
day of August. We
had just had our
dinner when the man
at mast head cried Sail
Ho! the officer of the deck
says where away
replied about two points
on the weather bow Ho
Ho Yes she look like a
Frigate. Upon that
to quarters and clear
away your guns, get
up shot and powder
&c. &c. The drum
beat to quarters
Immediately hoisting our
Flag and standing

drawing nigh Decatur and
thought he could speak
to him. By this time Decatur
plainly heard Hull say
to Captain Hull you are
a fine and the first thing
I see is that the gun must
fall and the next thing
came and carried them
down the main deck
Decatur then ran to the
gangway of the ship
where Hull was and
after Hull returned to the
quarter deck Decatur
hailed him and told him
that his colours were
struck. Hull answered
that he could not hear
him. Decatur then
went down to the water's edge
and taking off part of the
mizen topsail yard and rolled
it up and put it under the
left arm. Captain Hull
then hailed him and told
him if he had struck, he said
yet. He then sent a lieutenant
for him and his officers
when Decatur found
he offered Hull his sword
but he may keep it says
he for what makes
me look so dull, Mr Decatur

on the cabin with me and
shut the door. I have business
first to be done. Then I saw
bringing the men and
officers aft and what was
left until he returned
to the magazine and then
to the ship and when
he returned to the
quarter deck he then
the hole was cut
the next morning
proceeded to Europe
taking them with him
we stopped at Gibraltar
stopped one day
with us to Tripoli
finished the second
cruise of the Constitution
in 1815

The third cruise of the Constitution was under Commodore William Bainbridge who sailed in the ship of the 1st Capt Hull left. We got ready for sea and stood for the Brazil coast where we arrived some time in Aug. We met with a large Portuguese frigate which Bainbridge knew. We had some fresh meat which was a treat for we had been living on salt provisions for a long time. At length we fell in with the Java Frigate commanded by Capt Lambert bound for Bombay with copper sails and rigging for a seventy four and three hundred and fifty soldiers. She was to windward and taking us to be the Essex with short guns kept off but she soon found out her mistake when her fore and mizen fell and became almost a wreck drifting down to our stern and in a few minutes after the main mast fell shivering we completed then hauled up hoisted the flag on a boom and lashed it to the stump of the mizen mast we double shotted our guns and lay down on our arms waiting for the word. Bainbridge sent for me and asked me if I had slept I said yes he sent me out a bread and brought off the officers; Capt Lambert was mortally wounded. Genl Hall was severely wounded. Bainbridge and had mostly on board to pay off the troops of that place. He continued to bring off the men and such things as were of value until 10 o'clock next day when we put a slow match to the magazine and blew her up, then went on to St Salvadore and landed the prisoners. Here we received orders from the American Consul to proceed home and not to stop or engage in any thing on the passage. This order was obeyed and we arrived at Boston. Thus ended the third cruise of the Constitution in 1813.

A cattle brought off in a boat and slaughtered on board also some fresh meat which was a treat for we had been living on salt provisions for a long time.

The fourth cruise of Old Ironsides was commanded by Charles Stewart, and a better man never stept. He being well appointed cruised among the West-India islands and while there he met 2 vessels of all class some of which he sunk and burnt some and boarded and took some others he chased. and took a large brig of war and [illegible] a large brig of war and [illegible] but could not get her. He chased the Leopard to get through the Menai passage and lost her in a thunder squall it being dark it was thought she changed her course in the night to deceive us for he was all creased but could not find any thing of her. He still cruised around finding nee and then a sail and in a short time had a number of prisoners on board and not knowing how to be troubled with them any longer he determined the next small vessel he took he would make a cartel of and shortly after he fell in with an old tar reported by the Captain of the Java Stewart hoisted with him to take the prisoners to England and Mr Stewart should give his reasons for the task this was done, he cruised a little longer and came home in the spring, but the British cruisers had come on the coast. He made Portsmouth harbour about daylight on a morning in the evening, and as our pilot was sick we had to stand in from sea. and that night we put to sea for Boston, but our ship [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Hall on board the belonged
in Marblehead and other
[illegible] Bell [illegible]
in this area on Sunday
about ten o'clock and by
twelve o'clock the military
had arrived and the in-
habitants began to about two
of from the fort, we had
the sedan chair ready for
them for they landed off a little
and then stood off and that
night we waited-over to Salem
and by three o'clock afor night
when we got under way and
down to Boston. This was the
end of the fourth cruise of
the Broadside in the war
of 1812.

The fifth and last cruise of the Constitution in the war of 1812 was under the command of Charles Stuard Esq Dec 19th, old Ironsides went out with substantially the same officers and men, she first went off Bermuda thence via Madeira into the Bay of Biscay, where she narrowly escaped sinking one night, being on a wind larboard tacks a bound driving at the rate of nine knots, the lee hause hold plug came out and in one half hour she would have sunk the water had allready filled the gundeck and was pouring down in to the hold of the Ship, the gunner ran on deck and reported to the officer of the deck, Shubrick the state of things, saying the Ship was sinking his reply was," Well if she does We will all go with her, let go the lee braces, haul in the wether braces and put her before it, stop the hausehole and rig and man the chain pumps and man them well. This was done and in about an hour and a half she was free, again braced braced up and sailing along as usual. She was also thrown down on her beam ends by a squall when cruising off Bermuda and a man lanched overboard going aloft to reef topsails at the same time and being a good swimmer was picked up, he came alongside bailing the boat with his hat as the boat had not been lowered down for four months and caked bad; Huffman

then officer of the deck charged him with trying to run away from the ship jesting he said I have a great mind to give you a dozen for attempting to run away, turning around laughing he said Pursers Steward give Smoky half a pint of whiskey.

After this we went off Lisbon where we fell in with a 74 and chased him allmost up to the rock and they immediately sent out boats to catch the old craft but the bird had flew in the night; a large ship came along side and after hailing her two or three times without any answer we fired two or three guns to compel her to answer which she did through an interpreter and found her to be a Portugese Frigate, Steward thinking it not prudent to stay long in one place stood off about twenty or thirty leagues Southwesterly this was on the 20th at one P.M saw a strange sail heading southwesterly the old craft hauled up a little and made chase it was not long before another sail was made to leward of the first vessel, they kept along and the old craft coming closer and closes to them, about sunset both ships ranged along side of the Constitution within half gun shot, Steward steps upon the cannonade the after side of the gang way and said to his men I understand there was some dissatisfaction in not having a fight with something before going home but now you will have fighting enough. The vessels being right to commence ordered

them to fire and it was returned first from one ship then from the other but the old craft had as good a master as ever stepped a ships deck Samuel Hickson was the man, great credit was due Mr Hickson in maneuvering so as to prevent their raking her as she was backing and filling the whole action. This was the smallest action ever fought it being in the night and two ships on one but that ships crew was not beat so easy, we took them both and could have taken two more in one hour afterwards. There was not a ship we took that was half a mug for old Ironsides and she could take another like her in one hour after as she never lost any of her spars and but about 12 or 15 men in any fight she had, and her crew was the smallest and her men the most capable ever known in the annals of history. Many of her men had been brought up on the sea, some had been masters of vessels both as sailors and marines and they were as united as brothers. They were all ways merry and lively and the officers liked to see them so, the officers would give all hands to mischief when we had a leisure afternoon, this was to encourage them. At one time in Boston harbor we were at this sport when a green looking countryman came alongside the ship in a shoe boat to look at the ship and having the whip on the main yard to whip in water one of the casks went down in the boat and commenced talking with the man

while another slipped the rope under his arms no sooner done than up he went crying a Turkey a Turkey, this was spot for the officers. They lowered him down on deck and showed him the ship he was a man over six foot high with broad brim hat, a long surtout and cane and cut a great figure in the air. After we captured the Cyane and Levant we started to the Isle of May to land the prisoners but when we got there we could not land them we went over to St Jago's and commenced landing them when three large ships made their appearance and we had to cut and run out and the three followed so close that we sent the prizes back and one of them was recaptured by them but they could not come up with the old craft. We stood off to the southward and went in to Murman where we landed the balance of the prisoners and then returned home This was the last cruise of the old Constitution in the war of 1812

I forgot to mention to my readers above that when we were chased off St Jago's when landing prisoners we left what boats and men there was ashore and as soon as they saw the ship under way they seized the crew of the ship and made prisoners of them, but there was two of them that had a little money and were old enough for them, so they bribed them and got off back into the country where they remained until peace, knowing well as they were not Americans they would not be exchanged although

naturalized citizens one was a Swede, Peter Miller and the other Francis Fox was a French man, they always had money and came home after the war and lived in Salem Mass and became rich. Peter Miller got to be a great merchant and owned a great many ships and was a fine man but the other poor fellows who were made prisoners of had to be sent to England and exchanged by which they were detained three or four months after Peace—

I must now correct many things stated in the Naval history concerning the proceedings of the chasing and manuvering of the British Squadron, We fell in with them in the morning about sunrise and at sundown they were all out of sight and we arrived at Boston without seeing them again until we went out and fell in with the Guinea and captured her. I must also further state that it was false to say the Guinea ever fired a gun after she got foul of the Constitution but the Constitution shot away her last mast standing and she drifted off to leeward. The statement is also false of the Java's running her Gibboom into the Constitution, she had none and but one mast standing and became unmanageable and run down to leeward about 100 feet from the stern of the old craft all was still when Byron having his

gun loaded, jumped readers may rely
down from the booms this being a true state-
and run aft and find ment from one whose
shooting a man in station was on the quar-
the top. She had not ter deck to receive orders
gone far before the mast and had a chance to see
fell Hayslip then hoisted and hear all that was said
the flag on a boom when or done on board during
we run down on him the whole war. The survivors
and he gave up without of the Constitution are
firing a gun. There has Andrew Peterson gunner
been a great deal added of the Navy at Norfolk
to make a large story and Thomas C Byron
it and many things left who are willing to certify
out that should be in, to the truth of this. I shall
having been chased 3 give them credit for all
days and nights and they done, it is my own
believing each other at to state the things as they
quarters is false altogether were; the Java was to
as many other statements. windward and had the
However there was nothing advantage, the Consti-
done on board of that ship tution not having got
but what was succesful her sails secured
during that war with before the Java fired
England in 1812. a broadside in to
I might of course make her killing and wound-
a great deal more of it ding several men
but I have left out cutting one in two
many small things and taking of Charles
that I thought not Waldo's leg in the main
worth notice But my

and she fired several distructive shots, one dismounting one of the guns on the forecastle another shot took the wheel and killed four men and wounded the quarter master but this was the most damage we recived as to the Guerriere we wipt her so quick she did not know what to make of it. Byron belonged to the marines but the Captain rated him as a petty officer by which he drew three shares and a third prize money. There was a number of men on board who had been pressed on board of British man of war and knew what they were fighting for and would have drinked an English mans blood at that time I believe I will say to my readers this was to stop the British from pressing our men out of our merchant men and putting them on board of their man of war and keeping them for life unless they could escape some way or another. Now I must make some remarks as to the act of congress this was declared against Great Britain in 1812 Congress passed an act that every man should receive prize money for every prize they took and if they did not have a chance to get them in if they destroyed them from the enemy they should be paid for them all the same. But this was never done we took the Guerriere and Java Frigates besides several other small prizes and destroyed them and government gave for that 1000 dollars. When Lord Hayslip exclaimed as she blew up there

goes three million of money, this was a damper on John Bull another prise be sent in with some prize goods amounting to about 1000 dollars of which government took their part, but what become of all the rest of the prizes? The Cyane came home a good little Ship and was kept in the service and worn out also the Levant was paid for by the Portugese Sixty thousand and not a cent did I ever get of it when I was entitled to three shares and a third of prize money according to my rank as I ranked with all rated officers under a commission. Now I must say something in behalf of my shipmates whose names should never be erased from the pages of fame and long may they be remembered by the lovers of this country God rest the brave. I will now state the undaunted and brave exploration of a young man who was Captain of the Gun that was capsized by a shot from the Java, this shot came in the port and struck the gun and turned it over complete Kingman on looking at the disaster his gun had met with, clapped his hand on his tack and exclaimed now fire at that; he and his men then righted the gun up again and said now I will pay you for it and commenced firing again, this was in the battle of the Java. Lieut Shubrick being stationed at one of the gun deck divisions got his coat caught under the buck

of one of the guns when firing her and took a Jack knife and cut it off and when he came on deck after the battle he looked like a pigeon with his tail plucked out but this was nothing he he was one of the best officers in the ship and as good a sailor as ever stepped a ships deck and was the man who so calmly replied to the Gunner when he reported to him that the ship was sinking "If she goes we will go with her". He was one of the calmest men when he was on duty that could be found and a good man every way.

Now I will state in what manner we contrived to do the duty which we so bravely performed, a man was always kept aloft on the main mast cross-trees with a Spy glass to look out and as soon as he would see any thing he would cry out ahead or where away it was and then all hands was called to make for her, then it was make sail and trim ship; no man allowed to go below except on duty, every man busy carrying shot fore and aft to trim ship, or making sail, heaving the log and liming her by the hour glass to see what way she would sail best, this we had to do as she would get out of trim by taking in wood and water every day, this we always done when in chase and never left

I will now give the names of the officers attached to the old craft through out the whole war of 1812. The first command Capt Hull, two cruises, first lieutenant Charles Morris, second Wardsworth, third Reed, fourth Huffman, fifth Morgan, Boatswain, Peter Adams Sailing master, Elvin. John Day masters mate Wegen sail maker & Varnum midshipman Third cruise Commodore William Bainbridge, first lieutenant, Parker, second Huffman, third Shubrick, his brother and Morgan were the other two, Elvin was also promoted to lieutenant, the boatswain was the same this was the time we took the Java in 1813

Fourth cruise Captain Charles Steward, first lieutenant Babbitt, second Huffman, third George Shubrick, fourth Morgan, fifth Hunter, Sailing master, Samuel Hickson, boatswain James Watson, gunner Davis, midshipmun Canning and Going every cruise I could not keep the run of them. I knew every man in the ship at that time I will mention some of them. The first cruise there was Mattison I Batey sailing masters mate, Delany Purser Tue, Purser Steward, Nicholas Fountain masters mate Waldo and Whipple who were also boarding masters and boarded them in an English lieutenants uniform, midshipmen Gordon, Cross, Palmer, and Stearns, Winter gunner, Anderson and

Darling in her last cruise.

Now I will state our sufferings on the night we crossed the equinoctial line, that night all hands came near dying for want of water. A number were dipping up with tin pots the water that had fallen from a small shower into the boats on deck and mixed with the salt water that had flew over the side into it also old tobacco chews which the men had thrown into the boats and they had to drink it. About daylight it began to rain as it generally does in crossing the line and we were very glad but was not allowed to catch a drop for our messes untill it was all over, but had to get up Casks and spread sails over the deck and fill them and strike them down into the hole. This was the way we had to live. Every shower the men would run with their pots and cans and stop the scuppher holes up to catch the water that fell on deck, dirty as it was they had to use it and sometimes it was so tarry that they could hardly swallow it others running & catching a little here and there upon the painted hammock or some other place which would be so dainty that it was almost impossible to use it, this was hard for us and I will now account to my readers for it; in the first place we dare not venture into a port in the day time so that the enemy could blockade us and having but six months provisions and water on board and daily taking prisoners to help drink it up. We had to put up with two thirds rations of provisions and three pints of water for twenty four hours, this was the cause of the great suffering on board as the men could not eat the salt grub without water and this caused Captain Steward to search out a by place to

get water, so we run off to Juan Fernandez the place where Robinson Crusoe was cast away, it was a desolate island inhabited only by convicts transported by the Portugeese for crime and not allowed a boat or anything to get away with. They built a sort of a raft with a seat on it and a large basket in front of the seat to put their bait hooks and lines and fish into and every morning the wind is blowing off shore and they paddle away off and fish and as the wind blows in towards the land at night they come in with it.—— They have a variety of good fish and are glad to change them for meat or bread which we exchanged with them, there is another island that they send the women to for crime.